

Bishop Lonsdale Primary School Code of Conduct for Local Governing Boards 2022

Introduction

Effective boards clearly set out what they expect of governors, particularly when they first join. All governing boards should adopt a code of conduct which details the behaviour and professional standards required for the board to carry out its work within the school/s and the community.

All governors agreeing to a code of conduct should do so with a good understanding of the core functions of governing boards, which are to:

- ensure there is clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- hold executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils and the performance management of staff
- oversee the financial performance of the organisation and makes sure its money is well spent
- ensure the voices of stakeholders are heard

This model code of conduct is anchored in the Seven Nolan Principles of Public Life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. The model code is also strengthened by the NGAs [Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education](#) which builds on the Nolan principles and outlines the principles which support ethical decision-making and challenge unethical behaviour in schools and trusts.

The model code recognises that effective governance is the result of strong professional relationships that are based on a mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities - appropriate relationships between individuals, the whole board and the leadership team of the school/trust.

Boards should use their code of conduct alongside individual role descriptions to ensure all members understand what is expected of them.

The board's code of conduct should set high expectations for everyone involved in governance. This requires all board members to take individual responsibility for developing their knowledge and skills on an ongoing basis.

Using a code of conduct to support effective teamwork

Effective governance requires effective teamwork: governors/trustees working collaboratively as colleagues to achieve a goal underpinned by a solid understanding and respect for each other's roles.

Chairs may refer to their code of conduct to support discussions such as annual governor performance reviews. In doing so, the code of conduct becomes a tool to help boards and individuals develop their governance practice.

Occasionally a Chair will need to deal with conflict or tension among the governing board. When it has not been possible to deal with tension or conflict informally, and the situation has become untenable, formal action may be necessary. In such cases, the appropriate rules and procedures should be applied, whether that is to suspend or remove a governor under articles of association as appropriate. Advice should be sought from the clerk to the governing board or jayne.hadfield@derby.gov.uk

Tailoring for your school

This model code is designed to act as a template and should be adapted to reflect:

- your specific governing board and school structure
- your board's delegated responsibilities
- policies and procedures that your individual school must follow; the code of conduct should not contradict other constitutional documents such as articles of association

Adopting and reviewing a code of conduct

The code of conduct should be discussed by the board before adoption to develop a sense of collective ownership. This collaborative approach ensures that the resulting code is a common reference point.

Boards should review and approve their code of conduct annually, ideally at the first meeting of the autumn term. When reviewing their code, the board should reflect on the events of the previous year and consider amendments to suit the needs of the board. Boards should also review their code of conduct upon any significant changes to the law or school policy.

When recruiting new members, boards may refer candidates to their code of conduct (and role description). This will help ensure new members have a good understanding of expectations before being appointed. New members should agree to and sign the board's code of conduct on being appointed.

Code of Conduct for Local Governing Boards

Once this code has been adopted by the governing board, all governors agree to faithfully abide by it.

We agree to abide by the Seven Nolan Principles of Public Life:

Selflessness

We will act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

We will avoid placing ourselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence us in our work. We will not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for ourselves, our family, or our friends. We will declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

We will act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

We are accountable to the public for our decisions and actions and will submit ourselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

We will act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information will not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

We will be truthful.

Leadership

We will exhibit these principles in our own behaviour. We will actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

We will focus on our core governance functions:

1. ensuring there is clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
2. holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils and the performance management of staff
3. overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent

and in addition we will ensure that the voices of stakeholders are heard

As individual board members, we agree to:

Fulfil our role & responsibilities

1. We accept that our role is strategic and so will focus on our core functions rather than involve ourselves in day-to-day management.
2. We will fulfil our role and responsibilities as set out in our scheme of delegation.
3. We will develop, share and live the ethos and values of our school/s.
4. We agree to adhere to school/trust policies and procedures as set out by the relevant governing documents and law.
5. We will work collectively for the benefit of the school/s.
6. We will be candid but constructive and respectful when holding senior leaders to account.
7. We will consider how our decisions may affect the school/s and local community.
8. We will stand by the decisions that we make as a collective.

9. Where decisions and actions conflict with the Seven Principles of Public Life or may place pupils at risk, we will speak up and bring this to the attention of the relevant authorities.
10. We will only speak or act on behalf of the board if we have the authority to do so.
11. We will fulfil our responsibilities as a good employer, acting fairly and without prejudice.
12. When making or responding to complaints we will follow the established procedures.
13. We will strive to uphold the school's / trust's reputation in our private communications (including on social media).
14. We will not discriminate against anyone and will work to advance equality of opportunity for all.

Demonstrate our commitment to the role

1. We will involve ourselves actively in the work of the board, and accept our fair share of responsibilities, serving on committees or working groups where required.
2. We will make every effort to attend all meetings and where we cannot attend explain in advance why we are unable to.
3. We will arrive at meetings prepared, having read all papers in advance, ready to make a positive contribution and observe protocol.
4. We will get to know the school/s well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.
5. We will visit the school/s and when doing so will make arrangements with relevant staff in advance and observe school and board protocol.
6. When visiting the school in a personal capacity (for example, as a parent or carer), we will continue to honour the commitments made in this code.
7. We will participate in induction training and take responsibility for developing our individual and collective skills and knowledge on an ongoing basis.

Build and maintain relationships

1. We will develop effective working relationships with school leaders, staff, parents and other relevant stakeholders from our local community/communities.
2. We will express views openly, courteously and respectfully in all our communications with board members and staff both inside and outside of meetings.
3. We will work to create an inclusive environment where each board member's contributions are valued equally.
4. We will support the chair in their role of leading the board and ensuring appropriate conduct.

Respect confidentiality

1. We will observe complete confidentiality both inside and outside of school when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern individual staff, pupils or families.
2. We will not reveal the details of any governing board vote.
3. We will ensure all confidential papers are held and disposed of appropriately.
4. We will maintain confidentiality even after we leave office.

Declare conflicts of interest and be transparent

1. We will declare any business, personal or other interest that we have in connection with the board's business, and these will be recorded in the register of business interests.
2. We will also declare any conflict of loyalty at the start of any meeting should the need arise.
3. If a conflicted matter arises in a meeting, we will offer to leave the meeting for the duration of the discussion and any subsequent vote.

4. We accept that the Register of Business Interests will be published on the school/trust's website.
5. We will act in the best interests of the school/trust as a whole and not as a representative of any group.
6. We accept that in the interests of open governance, our full names, date of appointment, terms of office, roles on the governing board, attendance records, relevant business and pecuniary interests, category of governor/trustee and the body responsible for appointing us will be published on the school/trust website.
7. We accept that information relating to board members will be collected and recorded on the DfE's national database (Get information about schools), some of which will be publicly available.

We understand that potential or perceived breaches of this code will be taken seriously and that a breach could lead to formal sanctions.

Adopted by: Bishop Lonsdale Primary School on [date]

Signed: [chair of board]

The [governing board] agree that this code of conduct will be reviewed annually, upon significant changes to the law and policy or as needed and it will be endorsed by the full governing board.
